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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000129

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SUBJECT: DIWANIYAH SECURITY - TURNING A CORNER?

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CLASSIFIED BY: Alfred Fonteneau, Regional Coordinator, REO Al  
Hillah, Dept of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Diwaniyah provincial government has become more aggressive about turning around deteriorating security in the province, and preliminary results are encouraging. After a series of meetings with REO staff and personnel at Camp Echo, Governor Hamza held a public meeting in which he announced that eight political parties represented on a new Provincial Council Security Committee would support an enhanced security action plan. He also lambasted provincial police upper ranks in front of the press, assigning commanders to specific areas and warning them that they would be fired if attacks occurred in their area of responsibility. The Diwaniyah newspaper editor reports that government workers have returned to work and the police are patrolling more aggressively. The frequency of indirect fire against Camp Echo has declined. While the provincial government's commitment to enhanced security is still in its early days, initial results suggest that the situation is improving. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) Earlier in July, REO staff told Diwaniyah (Qadisiyah) contacts close to Governor Hamza that the deteriorating security situation was rapidly bringing about a draw down of US-funded reconstruction projects in the province. The inability of Army Corps of Engineer and other professional staff to regularly visit sites or to dispatch their local staff to projects was jeopardizing progress. In addition, many projects had fallen seriously behind because of low technical competence and inefficiency in the provincial government. The kidnapping, torture, and assassination of the Army Corps of Engineer's head Iraqi engineer at Camp Echo exacerbated relations, and the Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee (PRDC) was no longer regularly meeting.

¶3. (C) Governor Hamza arranged a meeting with REO staff to discuss the security situation. The following day, he and eight members of a newly formed Provincial Security Council came to the REO to continue the discussion. He agreed to renew contact with MND-CS personnel on Camp Echo, including the new Polish base commander.

¶4. (SBU) Diwaniyah television, radio, and newspapers widely covered the Security Committee's first public hearing. All eight parties represented pledged to cooperate and work together to reduce the incidence of violence. The leader of the Office of Martyr Sadr (OMS - Muqtada al-Sadr's political branch) stated that Muqtada al-Sadr had ordered that there would be no Sadrist attacks against civilians or Iraqi Security Forces and said that if militia members were arrested and investigated for such attacks, OMS would not support them. His pledge did not appear

to extend as far as Coalition Forces, but did represent a significant softening of the hard line "we control the city" stance taken by his predecessor.

¶5. (C) Except for remarks made by the representative of Al-Zarkhi/Al-Husseini, the tone was positive throughout the meeting. The Al-Husseini representative said that the Al-Zarkhi militia would not refrain from seeking punishment for Iraqi Army operatives who had been involved in a car chase and shoot-out with militia members back in May. Governor Hamza told the Al-Husseini representative that those "civilians" were from Baghdad and were not the province's affair. Hamza and the Provincial Council Chairman also stated that they serve under Prime Minister Malicki who has agreed to let Coalition Forces remain in the country for the time being in order to safeguard security.

¶6. (C) A Diwaniyah newspaper reporter told REO staff that high-ranking Diwaniyah police officers traveled to Najaf to meet with Muqtada al-Sadr (MAS). According to our contact, MAS replied that he will investigate attacks allegedly carried out by Mahdi Militia units, and if they were found out to be responsible, he would close down the OMS office in Diwaniyah just as he has already done in Basra. The reporter remarked that last week, a woman shopper involved in an altercation with a downtown market stall owner left in a rage and returned a half hour later with Mahdi Militia members who proceeded to close down the market. Similar episodes were damaging the reputation of MM and souring the militia's relations with the Diwaniyah business community.

¶7. (SBU) The reporter also noted that this week, Diwaniyah is noticeably more relaxed. For the first time in several weeks, the traffic police were on the job and more provincial government employees than usual were going to work. He said that it was widely rumored that Governor Hamza would dismiss the Diwaniyah Police Chief in accordance with a new Ministry of Interior directive ordering performance reviews for all Police

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Chiefs belonging to political parties. Governor Hamza met with provincial police high-ranking officers on Monday, August 6, and warned them that they would be assigned to specific sectors and fired if attacks occurred in those sectors. General Uthman of the 8th IA had moved Iraqi Army personnel into checkpoints around Diwaniyah's perimeter and the combined increased ISF presence was noticeable.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: While far too soon to tell if there will be lasting results, indirect fire against Camp Echo has greatly diminished from two weeks ago when attacks were on a near-nightly basis. A lull in IED and EFP attacks against CF convoys could be attributable to the new security understanding or may simply reflect a period of replenishment of stocks by militia units. END COMMENT  
FONTENEAU